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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: EREZ CROSSING AND INDUSTRIAL ZONE
REOPENED; PA INTELLIGENCE OFFICER KILLED IN SHOOTOUT WITH
AL-AQSA MARTYRS' BRIGADES. AUGUST 1, 2005 (1700 HOURS
LOCAL)

This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

11. (SBU) Summary: On July 31 the GOI opened the Erez Crossing for Palestinian merchants and the Erez Industrial Zone for Palestinian laborers, both for the first time since the July 12 suicide bombing in Netanya. Two UNDP consultants were kidnapped July 29 by a Gaza clan whose members hoped to pressure the PA into winning the release of a relative whom the Jenin Martyrs' Brigades had kidnapped a day earlier. The UNDP hostages and the Jenin Martyrs' Brigades kidnapping victim were all subsequently released. A Palestinian man was killed July 31 in a separate dispute between Gaza families. In the West Bank, a Palestinian intelligence officer was killed in Nablus during a shoot-out with members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades on July 29. Eleven Palestinians were reported injured in three separate clashes with settlers or the IDF in the southern West Bank on July 30 and 31. End summary.

Gaza

12. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death/family dispute: UNRWA reported that, on July 31 in Khan Yunis, a Palestinian man, Nabeel Shahwan, was killed by gunfire that erupted during a dispute between the Shahwan and Al Akad families.

-- Injuries/work accident (catch-up): According to UNRWA, a Palestinian "militant" (no affiliation listed) suffered shrapnel wounds on July 29 at 0200 when a Qassam rocket that he and others were attempting to launch from Al Berka (Deir El Balah) exploded prematurely.

-- Kidnappings: On July 29 at 1340, five armed men from the Abed family abducted two UNDP consultants in their car in Gaza City. The Abeds reportedly abducted the two men to put pressure on the PA to secure the release of Jihad Abed, whom the Jenin Martyrs' Brigade had kidnapped on July 28 (see "Kidnappings" section of July 29 sitrep). The hostages were released to the Head of PA Preventive Security at 1835 the same day. The Jenin Martyrs' Brigades subsequently released Jihad Abed, who is a top aide to Musa Arafat, at 0100 on July 130.

-- Mortars: The IDF reported 11 mortar attacks (16 shells fired) during the 72-hour period ending at 0600 on August 1: On July 29, two shells were fired towards Sderot and Yad Mordechai at 1420, one shell was fired at Neve Dekalim at 2330, and three more shells were fired at Sderot, Givim and Nir Am at 2350. On July 30, a shell was fired at an IDF outpost near "Slav" at 0500. On July 31, a shell was fired at 0100 towards Netzer Hazani; another shell at 0110 towards Dekel; another shell at 0120 towards an IDF outpost west of Khan Yunis; and three shells were fired at IDF soldiers south of the Erez crossing at 0615. On August 1, single shells were fired at 0025 towards Sderot, and at 0040 and 0305 towards Neve Dekalim. No injuries were reported in any of the incidents. In addition to these incidents reported by the IDF, UNRWA reported that a mortar shell was fired from Khan Yunis toward Neve Dekalim on July 31 at 0230 (for which the Abu Er-Rish Brigades took credit). UNRWA also reported that three mortar shells were fired at Morag and Rafiah Yam settlements on July 31 between 0300 and 0330. UNRWA reported that the IDF responded with machine-gun fire. No injuries were reported.

-- Rockets/Anti-tank: UNRWA reported that militants fired an anti-tank rocket at an IDF APC positioned near the Egyptian border at 0020 on July 29. The IDF responded with sporadic machine gun fire for ten minutes. UNRWA also reported an anti-tank rocket fired at a tank outside the Rafiah Yam settlement on July 30 at 2250. No injuries were reported in either incident.

-- Rockets/Qassams: Israeli media reported one Qassam fired from Beit Hanoun into the Negev at 0115 on August 1. The IDF reported a Qassam fired at Gadid at 0950 on July 29. UNRWA reported that militants fired "home-made rockets" from Beit Hanoun into the Negev at 1415 (2 rockets) and 2320 (one rocket) on July 29. The 2320 rocket landed short and exploded in a Palestinian village. No injuries were reported. UNRWA reported three rockets fired from Rafah/Tel Es-Sultan towards Atzmona between 0320 and 0420 on July 30 (for which PIJ took credit). UNRWA also reported a rocket fired on July 30 at 1815 from Beit Lahia toward Dugit and two more fired at 0030 from Khan Yunis to Neve Dekalim (for which the Abu Er-Rish Brigades took credit).

-- Shootings: The IDF reported 14 shooting incidents between 0600 on July 29 and 0600 on August 1. No injuries were reported in any of the incidents. In each case the apparent targets were either IDF soldiers or settlements.

13. (SBU) ARRESTS: (Catch-up item) UNRWA reported that an IDF patrol arrested four men in a house west of the Abu Houli checkpoint (Deir El Balah) on July 29 at 0200. Two of the men were later released.

14. (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS: UNRWA reported that four IDF tanks and two bulldozers moved from Kfar Darom into a Palestinian area about 300 meters southwest of the settlement on July 30 at 0010. The bulldozers moved sand to form a protective barrier and departed at 0500.

15. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS:

-- The GOI reopened the Erez Crossing for Palestinian merchants on July 31. It had been open only to international travelers and Jerusalem ID holders. About 70 merchants crossed on July 31 and 100 merchants crossed on August 1.

-- The GOI reopened the Erez Industrial Zone on July 31 for Palestinian laborers. It had been closed since July 13 following the July 12 Netanya suicide bombing. On July 31, 350 laborers entered the zone. On August 1, 488 entered.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers, but open for the import of aggregates used in construction.

-- Karni Terminal was partially open.

-- Rafah Terminal was open in both directions except for Palestinian males between the ages of 16 and 35 traveling from Gaza to Egypt.

-- Toufah checkpoint was open in both directions for all Palestinians except males between the ages of 16 and 30

16. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- UNRWA reported that that members of Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades blocked the coastal road at Nuseirat T junction between 2200 and 2300 on July 31. The protesters demanded jobs from the PA.

West Bank

17. (SBU) ATTACKS/SECURITY:

-- Deaths: According to Palestinian sources, a Palestinian intelligence officer, Mohammad Rahal, was killed in a shoot-out in Nablus July 29. Following an investigation, it was revealed that members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades from the village of Kufur Qalil killed Rahal. The initial investigation, according to Palestinian Authority (PA) security sources, does not indicate that the killing was premeditated.

-- Injuries: According to Palestinian media, five Palestinians on July 31 were injured during clashes with settlers near Yatta village in the southern West Bank (also see "Clashes").

-- Injuries: According to Palestinian media, two Palestinians on July 30 were injured in clashes with IDF soldiers who entered into Bani Naim village, near Hebron.

-- Injuries: Palestinian sources reported that four Palestinian youths on July 30 were injured by inhalation of tear gas during clashes with the IDF in Ayada refugee camp, near Bethlehem.

-- Arrests: Palestinian newspapers reported that the IDF on August 1 arrested a total of four Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) militants in al-Bireh, Bethlehem, Beit Ummar, and Qalandiya, near Ramallah.

-- Arrests: According to Palestinian media, IDF soldiers on

July 31 arrested three PIJ militants in Nur Shams refugee camp, near Tulkarm.

-- Arrests: According to Palestinian sources, IDF troops on July 30 arrested two wanted PIJ militants near Tulkarm.

-- Shooting: According to Israeli and Palestinian reports, shots were fired on July 31 at Neve Zuf settlement, north of Ramallah. No injuries were reported.

-- Settler Violence: According to Israeli and Palestinian sources, settlers from Sa Nur settlement, one of the four northern West Bank settlements to be evacuated, on July 31 clashed briefly with Palestinians in the area. There were no reported injuries or damage from this incident.

-- Shooting: Palestinian media reported that Palestinian gunmen on July 30 opened fire at an IDF force examining a suspicious object in the village of Yatta, south of Hebron. No injuries or damages were reported. (Also see "closures/Curfews.")

-- Security Incident: According to Palestinian reports, IDF soldiers on July 30 found a handgun after searching the belongings of a Palestinian at a roadblock south of Ramallah. The Palestinian was detained for questioning.

-- Clashes: According to Palestinian sources, settlers on July 31 reportedly uprooted Palestinian-owned olive and fruit trees near Yatta village in the Hebron area. (Also see "Injuries.")

-- Demonstration: According to Palestinian reports, PA special forces members on July 30 demonstrated in Tulkarm to protest the PA Ministry of Interior's decision to disband the units and amalgamate them within the PA National Security Forces. No incidents or clashes took place during the demonstration.

18. (SBU) CLOSURES/CURFEWS:

-- According to Palestinian media, the IDF on July 30 imposed a curfew on the southern parts of Hebron following shootings directed at IDF soldiers in the area. (Also see "Shootings.")

-- Palestinian sources reported that the IDF on July 31 set up a gate north of Nablus on the main road leading to Jenin. Residents of the village of Dier Sharaf have subsequently demonstrated against the gate. IDF sources said the gate is meant to control movement of traffic ahead of the pullout from the northern parts of the West Bank.

19. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Palestinian sources reported that Palestinian Legislative Council Speaker Rawhi Fattuh was tasked to negotiate with the factions in order to set a date for the legislative elections. Fattuh will be holding meetings with Hamas, PIJ and other factions to reach an agreement on a date before President Abbas signs a decree for the elections. According to Palestinian media reports, PA Information Minister Nabil Sh,ath said that he expected Abbas to issue the decree specifying the date for the legislative elections by August 7.

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